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MAYOR KENNETH A. GIBSON'S STATEMENT ON THE APRIL 5TH
NEWARK SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION

" I am concerned that Councilman Henry Martinez thinks he has any business determining the authenticity of a letter sent to voters over my name. Martinez seems to be spending an inordinate amount of time attempting to be a handwriting expert rather than looking at the issue of Type I or Type II school districts straight on.

"When the matter of an elected school board first arose, I stated my basic reservations:

- * the difficulty with guaranteeing proportional representation
- * creating another body of politicians
- * the possibility of well-financed campaigners buying the Board of Education in Newark
- * the problem with the public properly understanding a complicated budget and voting for something which might, in fact, increase the taxes they will have to pay.

"In pointing up the dangers of 'greedy, corrupt and racist politicians' getting involved in the school board election, I was dealing with reality rather than anything meant to be inflammatory. If the shoe does not fit any particular individual, there is no reason for them to put it on. However, as we can see in Chicago, racism is still alive and dangerous in our nation. To attempt to warn people about this danger is extremely responsible.

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"It still bothers me that in an at-large election, I seriously doubt that a Portuguese or Puerto Rican candidate for the school board could be elected.

"I will do everything I can to make sure that these groups continue to be represented on the Newark School Board. They are a vital and important part of the Newark community and I will not stand by and see them removed from the Board of Education by a political process.

"The elected school board concept has failed miserably every place it has been attempted, most pointedly in Trenton. Why I should not stand against something which obviously does not work is a mystery to me.

"If we were addressing the issue of a representative school board dedicated to the well-being of Newark students, I would not object to the political process. However, Type II school district guarantees nothing but confusion.

"Newark has more than its share of politicians profiling for the purpose of strengthening their political base. The educational process in our city should not become another arena for political profiling.

"During my tenure, I have appointed people to the Newark School Board who are not only representative of the racial mixture of our city but I have made these appointments irrespective of gender. Many of these people who made vital contributions on the Board of Education, could not or would not, have been on the Board through an at-large elective process.

"I am urging voters to return to a Type I school board for the sake of the children and the movement being made to improve education in Newark.

"The Newark school system is beginning to take leaps in the right direction and I see no good reason to stymie this progress for a political exercise which will mean nothing by way of improving education."